

# **WOMEN'S PARLIAMENT**

## **DECLARATION**

1st of July, 2019



**PARLAMENT DE CATALUNYA**

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The Fourth International Women's Conference, which took place in September, 1995, in Beijing, was met with an unprecedented turnout: 17,000 participants and 30,000 activists from all over the world came to Beijing to participate in the event. Over a number of weeks, the foundations of an agenda for women's rights were established. A declaration was put together and a platform for action was created, which has been essential for understanding the profound changes that have come about within society, as a result of differences and consensus, and, above all, the desire to ensure that states take note of the importance of recognising and guaranteeing women's rights, and that institutions also take such goals onboard. The Women's Parliament embraces the same spirit of that democratic gesture that came into being in September, 1995, and which emphasised the idea that women can not continue to be left at the margins, but rather that they should be at the heart of affairs. Women must decide for themselves, they must be listened to, and they must be recognised as legal subjects.

In 1995, the Beijing Platform for Action imagined a world in which every woman and every girl could exercise their rights and enjoy real equality. In order for this to become a reality, a series of recommendations were put before all the institutions, specified through particular actions which were aimed at guaranteeing the rights of women, such as living a life free from violence, being able to attend school, having access to healthcare at any time, being able to make their own decisions and being paid the same wage as a man for the same work. Over the past 25 years, many challenges have been taken on and addressed, but there are several issues that remain unsolved. Intersectionality clears the way for diversity, making it a central pillar, and allows for more work on addressing equality through the recognition of differences as common values.

The conference in Beijing unleashed an unwavering political will that will never burn out or be side-lined by fundamentalism, past or present. The conference also highlighted the forms of discrimination used by the patriarchy to punish and silence women. The conference served to connect and reinforce the activism of women's movements across the globe. Today, almost twenty-five years later, as elected representatives from the Catalan Parliament and from women's organisations and as experts who are linked to the National Women's Council of Catalonia, we meet in the Parliament of Catalonia as a Women's Parliament, to continue changing the world for the better through small gestures full of deep symbolism and a clear commitment to the future.

These future commitments, all of which are included in this declaration of the Women's Parliament, must be present in and taken onboard by all institutions and in all mechanisms and instruments. One of the main instruments, which was already highlighted at the Beijing Conference, is the fair provision of resources and the need to create budgets that truly guarantee equality policies, within a framework for equality and with a gender perspective in mind, and, above all, the dismantling and elimination of the discriminatory foundations upon which the patriarchal system is built.

The challenges that we have outlined in this declaration include the twelve key areas that were highlighted in the Beijing Declaration from 1995, and which elected Members of Parliament and representatives from the National Women's Council of Catalonia have come together to address through six working groups (Human Rights for Women, the Right to Education and Culture, Labour and Economic Rights, the Right to Social and Political Engagement, Health and Sexual and Reproductive Rights, and the Right of Women and Girls to live free from Gender-Based Violence). This declaration is the first step on the long road that goes beyond the commemoration of the Beijing Conference that took place twenty-five years ago, and we hope that this declaration means that we will be heard and given support so that we can build, amongst all women, new spaces that transform our society and create a fairer, more diverse, and more equal society. Through this declaration, we would like to emphasise that the future means putting life and caring at the centre of our lives, and that the ways of bringing about this change carry great importance. Therefore, we must make it easier for all of us to commit ourselves to being up to date, as a country, in order to face the challenges that were outlined during the Beijing Conference.

## I. HUMAN RIGHTS FOR WOMEN

The legal focus on human rights, as expressed in conventions and other human rights instruments aimed at women, is indispensable, but it is not enough to bring about a change in the culture that nurtures unequal gender relations. This is why we, every feminist movement and all those who fight against discrimination, continue to work to change the patriarchal paradigm and to bring about social transformation, ensuring that international instruments aimed at ensuring the human rights of women are imbued with feminist political content.

We want to warn against the fragility of states in recognising the human rights of women, as well as protecting and guaranteeing such rights. The Vienna Declaration of 1993 recognises the rights of women as human rights for the first time. Therefore, the human rights of women are recognised in international agreements and related instruments, such as the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), the Vienna Declaration, the Beijing International Women's Conference and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women International Cairo Conference. Other not gender-specific international human rights treaties (ICESCR, ICCPR, CERD) and their monitoring committees have incorporated a gender perspective in recent years.

Content relating to gender justice must be collected from international instruments and implemented in policies within Catalonia through an intersectional approach that will allow us to identify different types of discrimination and to address the causes, instead of simply dealing with the effects.

It should be noted that gender mainstreaming is an effective strategy in bringing about equality between women and men in public policies. This approach also helps to eliminate inequalities, corrects procedures and working practices, and also drives trends in societal change. However, this will not come about through the sporadic application of

punctual measures, but rather through the introduction of transversal gender policies that result in structural and societal change.

The Women's Parliament endorses the United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325, on women, peace and security, which reaffirms the need to increase the role of women in decision-making in order to prevent and resolve conflicts, and in order to consolidate peace. This resolution also reminds us that we must continue to make it clear that girls and women are the main victims of conflicts and violence, and, therefore, a specific approach is needed to curb these issues.

## II. EDUCATION AND CULTURE

We, as a Women's Parliament, ratify that Catalonia has a legal system with laws like the 17/2015 Law, regarding the true equality between women and men, the 5/2008 Law, regarding the rights of women to eradicate gender-based violence, and the 11/2014 Law, which guarantees the rights of lesbians, gays, bisexuals, transgender and intersexual individuals and which aims to eradicate homophobia, biphobia and transphobia, that regard co-education as an essential element in achieving educational goals whilst at the same time preventing discrimination, injustice and violence against girls and women. Nevertheless, these laws must be implemented, a task which, apart from requiring an adequate budget, must accommodate the plurality and diversity of women and girls based on the context, realities, and needs, as well as the social, political and economic position that these women and girls hold.

We find that, when talking about culture and education, androcentrism continues to be dominant in all areas of knowledge, in all of its manifestations as well as in its dissemination and perpetuation. Education must not be a mere transmitter of this patriarchal society, but rather it should aspire to bring about another world. The framework of educational specifications must always be that of an education that promotes democratic, co-educational values and critical thinking throughout life, from children in nursery and primary education all the way up to adult education.

We continue to place an emphasis on the importance of teacher training in the transversal incorporation of a gender perspective, in order to overcome androcentrism in sexist content as well as stereotypical behaviours and attitudes which lead to situations of gender-based violence within the educational sphere, an area that should be nurturing, protective and empowering for girls and women.

We wish to reiterate that we need to successfully incorporate affective-sexual education throughout all levels of compulsory education, adapted to suit each age group, with a feminist perspective and a focus on sexual and reproductive rights.

In order to achieve equal opportunities, as well as to recognise and value differences, both in the field of formal education and non-formal education during leisure time, it is imperative that we adopt inclusive language, that makes the feminine visible (verbal and iconic); the occupation of spaces, especially those relating to leisure such as school playgrounds, without stereotypes; that we promote degrees and STEM careers to women; that we create content for the educational curriculum that makes visible all the areas

where women are and historically have been influential, giving all their contributions to ensure survival and to uphold the quality of everyday life, feminine knowledge, and women's artistic manifestations, whilst highlighting the feminine and feminist genealogy so that these memories are not lost.

We want to highlight the role of families, in all their diversity, as transmitters of education and culture; We want to emphasise the role of women, the need to promote greater co-responsibility for men, and the value of intergenerational dialogue.

Culture and education go hand in hand, and, within the broader field concerning the right to culture, our goals are to focus mainly on the media, museums and other instances of the popularisation of knowledge, artistic expression, of literary publication, performance, and in the fields of music and sports, where we must work to promote a non-stereotypical image of women. There is a need for a balanced presence of women in areas where they continue to be a minority, and we must work to call out the obstacles that hinder their participation.

Finally, we insist that the political will as well as any necessary financing and resources be provided. The continuation and further expansion of good practices of a high quality must be guaranteed. We must work to detect any deficiencies and to promote action in those areas where deficiencies arise. The establishment of effective monitoring mechanisms, specific observatories, appropriate indicators, as well as the establishment of spaces to check on the accountability of current laws are recommended, as well as the effective dissemination of the obtained results.

### III. LABOUR AND ECONOMIC RIGHTS

With regards to labour and economic rights, we must combat job insecurity and promote equal pay for equal work between men and women by eliminating the gender pay gap, through compliance with legislation concerning equality programmes, collective bargaining and plans to eliminate gender-based wage differences. We must work to overcome the segregation of the labour market, and eliminate the gender-based wage gap which has been derived from toxic stances and a sexist valuation of feminised jobs and occupations, whilst working with all spheres - including the public – to shape social care policies, in a move to advance towards a model that allows both women and men to combine their work, personal life and caring duties.

It is also essential that we promote true gender parity within decision-making bodies through the establishment of systems, such as quotas, which guarantee that at least fifty per cent of the roles within management boards will be held by women, as well as within management and the institutional setting; the empowerment of women through mentoring programmes in order to break through the glass ceiling, as well as the regulation of the effective performance of mechanisms that are meant to bring about gender parity, such as the zipper system.

Another priority is the need to ensure true equality for self-employed women and women living in rural areas. The types of the discrimination suffered by women in the workplace have a particular influence on their present and future benefits, therefore, we must combat

the feminisation of poverty through a national plan that provides for the creation of indicators with a gender perspective; by promoting specific measures to protect the rights of the most vulnerable groups of women through effective access to a guaranteed income, an increase of non-contributory pensions, using the minimum wage as a reference, equal rights comparisons between single-parent families and larger families, and priority access to social housing, alongside the application of social policies with a gender perspective.

#### IV. SOCIAL AND POLITICAL ENGAGEMENT

The feminist movement plays a vital role in bringing about societal change and is a key movement in standing up to groups that promote intolerance and which attack equality and diversity. That is why reforms must be promoted to ensure that all women have the right to social and political engagement.

One of the key actions that must be undertaken is to ensure that there is a parity between women and men of fifty percent in all of the collegiate bodies of all institutions, public administrations and social and political organisations, as well as in debates and on opinion panels featured on mass media, promoting collegial relations, creating mechanisms for monitoring compliance with regards to gender parity and taking care to incorporate diversity (individuals from different cultural backgrounds, functional diversity, gender identity, sexual orientation and age diversity). Secondly, the sustainability of calls for public subsidies aimed at feminist and women's organisations must be guaranteed, avoiding a needs-based approach. At the same, a gender perspective must be incorporated into the processes that enable citizen participation, thus promoting visibility and the recognising the contributions made and forms of organization used by women from a migrant or ethnic minority background and ensuring that participatory councils are decision-making bodies where the public authorities are made aware of their actions.

Finally, it is essential that all forms of discrimination that women suffer when exercising the right to political participation be eradicated, such as the limitations faced by migrant women; legal restrictions on the free exercise of the right of assembly and demonstration; the lack of effective measures to reconcile personal, family and work life; gender-based violence directed against women in politics and female activists on social networks; the digital gender divide - especially among women from vulnerable groups -, or the lack of an adequate response from social and political organisations regarding sexual or psychological harassment towards women.

#### V. HEALTH AND SEXUAL AND REPRODUCTIVE RIGHTS

With regards to health and the sexual and reproductive rights of women, it is necessary that we bring about a change in both the preventative model and health care model, so that they become universal and are able to address the social and environmental determinants of health from a gender perspective, as well as from a feminist and intersectional perspective, based on the human rights of women, and which also encompasses sexual and gender diversity.

In order to do so, we must promote universal access to healthcare services and information for women, throughout their lives and across all regions. This should be appropriate for the context and diversity of cases, realities, experiences and life cycles, and should incorporate sexual and reproductive rights for women in a holistic and inclusive manner, whilst also ensuring security, bodily autonomy and sovereignty, and respecting women's right to choose whether they would like to have or not have children, as well their decision on how that family may be structured.

Women's health care programmes and preventative health care programmes for women must be bolstered, with a special impact on affective-sexual education and on co-responsibility; providing information, as well as universal and free access to abortion services across every region, contraception and fertility services, as well as the promotion of research, training and the dissemination of information on women's health with a gender perspective

It is also important that the resources allocated to women's healthcare are increased, monitoring their collective health systematically, and ensuring an equitable distribution of budgets and the introduction of a policy for accountability.

## VI. RIGHT OF WOMEN AND GIRLS TO LIVE FREE FROM GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE

The Women's Parliament, in face of the serious situation regarding the violation of rights stemming from gender-based violence, wishes to point out that states must act with due diligence, in accordance with international law, including the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women, the Beijing Declaration and the Istanbul Convention.

On this basis, and in order to carry out such due diligence, measures like the following need to be adopted.

The 5/2008 Law, of the 24th of April, regarding the right of women to eradicate sexist violence, must be modified to include institutional violence. Definitions, classifications and sanctions as well as recourse procedures must be established, and an external observatory for public administration that collects complaints from women and entities regarding institutional violence should be created. The Law must establish mechanisms that guarantee: an approach that tackles all forms of gender-based violence; ensuring women requiring help are not subject to a waiting period that exceeds fifteen or twenty days; the quality of this attention with the specialization of public places and clauses for outsourcing that guarantee decent work conditions, among other measures to combat the precariousness within the sector; the elaboration of a qualitative study of the judicial bodies that allows for appropriate measures to be taken in the fight against the gender-based violence, and, finally, instruments to ensure that the Law is implemented.

The comprehensive care of children and adolescents who find themselves in a situation where gender-based violence is present must be ensured, and sufficient resources and services must be provided, co-ordinating with the network for combatting gender-based violence and child protection authorities with protocols that include a gender perspective

and ensuring staff are given adequate training; with the establishment of gender-sensitive protocols to deal with juvenile victims of sexual violence (such as the new Barnahus model or other models that work with non-victimisation) and the allocation of resources to respond to situations of violence, such as forced marriages or female genital mutilation. The psychoeducational and therapeutic care of minors must be guaranteed, so that they are not obliged to obtain consent from both parents or, in cases where permission is not granted, to submit to interventions through criminal or civil proceedings. The Administration, in compliance with the duty of due diligence and the best interest of children and young people, must guarantee training for the judiciary and legal operators in order to avoid, as established under current legislation, joint custody in the judgments they pass for cases involving gender-based violence. A review of meeting points must be carried out, which must prioritise and guarantee the best interests of the child.

The rights of women who are victims of trafficking for sexual exploitation must be guaranteed with specific support measures from the very moment that these situations of violence are detected, and the rights of these women as victims must be recognised. It is essential to lead on from women's policies to ensure access to comprehensive care networks, resources and benefits, as well as ensuring safety and access to legal assistance by promoting detection and identification tools that allow for the effective exercise of these rights, without the need or requirement to collaborate with or submit a complain to the police or judicial bodies, through a broad feminist approach that takes into account all the types of trafficking recognised with gender bias under the EU Anti-trafficking Directive 36/2011/EU, from the European Parliament and the Council of 5 April 2011 on preventing and combating trafficking in human beings and protecting its victims, which, in particular, affect situations such as "trafficking" (the trafficking of human beings) within the sex industry, for work within the domestic sphere, and forced marriages, among others. An ethical feminist approach is needed, one that avoids positions that give priority to questions regarding a supposed 'civic coexistence' or which fashion 'perfect victims' based on stereotypes. It is important that extended training is provided for professionals in order to differentiate realities (sexual exploitation trafficking, trafficking of people and prostitution) in order to create effective policies.